Getting into the Charity Sector

The charity sector is extremely diverse, hosting a vast array of organisations ranging in size, aims and activity. You may also hear it referred to as ‘The Third Sector’, ‘The Voluntary Sector’ or ‘Non-Governmental Organisations’.

With incomes rising, it is starting to have a positive effect in charitable donations and volunteering numbers. As charities deal with this influx of donations and volunteers, they can expand the outreach of their charity with more fundraising and campaigning to help the cause.

But there’s plenty more to charity than fundraising and campaigning. Take a look at this help sheet and get a feel for the sector. For a more comprehensive insight into the UK charity sector and to help provide talking points on applications and in interviews, visit any of our useful links.

**What areas of charities can I work in?**

Employment opportunities can be grouped into:

- accountancy and finance
- administration
- advice and counselling
- business development and project management
- campaigning, lobbying and fundraising
- corporate social responsibility (CSR)
- human resources (HR)
- information technology
- marketing and public relations (PR)
- research and policy
- retail
- social care
- support services
- teaching, education and training
• volunteer management and co-ordination

Who are the main graduate employers?
There are more than 160,000 charities registered within the UK, collectively employing around 880,000 people and generating approximately £47 billion in annual income. Employers in the charity and voluntary work sector include small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), social enterprises, non-governmental organisations and large charities.

Below is just a selection of organisations you can get involved with once graduated:

• Age UK
• Alzheimer’s Society
• Barnardo’s
• British Red Cross
• Cancer Research UK
• Macmillan Cancer Support
• MSF (Médecins Sans Frontières)
• National Trust
• Oxfam GB
• Wellcome Trust

These are a few examples of larger charities in the UK. There are lots of charities covering a wide variety of causes. Seek out organisations based on your passions.

Do I need a related degree?
This depends on the job that you want to do. For some roles, such as fundraising, the subject of your degree isn't as important as your practical skills and passion for the charity's cause. However, many charities seek employees with experience in specific areas such as sales, marketing, PR and business/finance-related areas. A lot of charities will not expect you to have relevant degrees, they would be aware that your experience will be drawn from other areas, i.e. societies and prior work experience.

For some fields, including international development, there are specific roles for people with professional qualifications, such as doctors, nurses and teachers. Having a Masters degree specialising/focused on the cause of that charity can put you ahead of other candidates in the recruitment process.

What skills do employers want?

Information gathered from Prospects and NCVO other sources, correct at the time of publication.
(September 2018)
Employers in the charities sector require candidates with:

- Commitment and motivation to the cause
- Creativity and innovation
- Flexibility and adaptability
- Communication skills
- Negotiation and persuasion skills
- Organisational skills
- Time management and multi-tasking

**Where can I look for work experience?**

Work experience is highly sought-after by graduate employers in this sector, and many employees volunteer before gaining paid contracts.

Most internships are voluntary. However, some organisations - including People & Planet and the Wellcome Trust - offer paid internships, while large charities - such as the National Trust, Oxfam GB, Macmillan Cancer Support and Age UK - provide placements and graduate schemes in a range of fields.

The charity sector has a long-established tradition of offering relevant work experience through volunteering, so smaller organisations will also have opportunities that can provide valuable experience.

A great place to start is with the Royal Holloway Volunteering team, take a look at their wide range of opportunities here: https://intranet.royalholloway.ac.uk/volunteering/home.aspx

**How do I find a graduate job in the charity sector?**

Some large organisations, such as Cancer Research UK and IntoUniversity, offer graduate schemes. These are very competitive; you may also need a 2:1 and a specific number of UCAS points to be eligible.

- **CHILD.org** offer a one-year, part-time course called Charity Apprentice. The course is made up of bite-size online tasks and fundraising challenges; acting as a direct step into the charity sector. You can expand your knowledge of the charity sector, get hands on experience promoting and taking part in fundraising challenges chosen and planned by you. [https://child.org/what-we-do](https://child.org/what-we-do)

Information gathered from Prospects and NCVO other sources, correct at the time of publication. (September 2018)
The **Charityworks Graduate Programme** offers a one-year, full-time paid job in a non-profit organisation. You are also assigned a professional development programme and opportunities to conduct research projects. Your role range from working with service users, to a corporate role in business development, fundraising, campaigns or research.

Employment opportunities are also advertised by sector-specific recruitment agencies such as **Charity People** and **Harris Hill**, or specialist websites including:

- **CharityJob** - https://www.charityjob.co.uk/
- **Institute of Fundraising** - https://www.institute-of-fundraising.org.uk/home/
- **Jobs in Charities** - http://www.jobsincharities.co.uk/
- **Third Sector** - https://www.thirdsector.co.uk/
- **Workfuly** -https://workfully.co.uk/

Smaller organisations may advertise on their own websites or in local newspapers. You could make speculative applications, sending prospective employers a CV and cover letter. If you take the trouble to find a named contact, you're more likely to receive a reply.

Charities also often use freelancers to deliver discrete pieces of work, there are some websites which can help you find this work such as: NGExchange https://www.ngoexchange.com/professionals/

**More useful links:**

- [https://data.ncvo.org.uk/almanac18/](https://data.ncvo.org.uk/almanac18/)
- [https://www.charitychoice.co.uk/](https://www.charitychoice.co.uk/)
- [https://www.thecompleteuniversityguide.co.uk/times-university-guide-and-league-tables/](https://www.thecompleteuniversityguide.co.uk/times-university-guide-and-league-tables/)
- [https://careersportal.royalholloway.ac.uk/](https://careersportal.royalholloway.ac.uk/) (book an appointment and discuss your options with a Careers Consultant)

For more support and advice please visit the Careers Centre, Davison Building, Ground Floor.

**Opening times: 10am-6pm (term-time)**

**Email:** careers@rhul.ac.uk

**Telephone:** 01784 443073

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